

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

This descriptive research aimed to examine the attitudes among Muslim Thais in Mueang Chiang Mai district, towards the problems in the southern border provinces of Thailand and to explore ideas about solutions. The findings from this study and the discussion regarding the findings are presented in four parts as follows:

Part I Demographic characteristics

Part II Data of religious commitment

Part III Data of media exposure, perception and gratification

Part IV Data of attitudes and opinions towards the problems in the southern provinces and ideas about solutions.

Part V Data obtained from community leaders

Part I Demographic Characteristics

Table1 Percentage of the respondents classified according to gender, age, and education

Demographic Characteristics	Percentage (%)
N = 270	
Gender	
Male	54.8
Female	45.2
Age	
18-25	27.4
26-45	38.5
46-60	27.8
> 60	6.3
Education	
Primary school	8.9
Junior high school	10
High school/Vocational school	21.10
Diploma	12.2
Bachelor's degree	38.10
Master's degree	7.0
Higher than Master's degree	2.6

The sample of this study consisted of 270 respondents. Male (54.8%) is more than female (45.2%). About four-in-ten (38.5%) were aged between 26-45 years old. A sizable proportion (38.10%) of the sample had bachelor's degree.

Part II Data of Religious Commitment

Table 2 Data of religious commitment of the respondents classified according to their performing in religious ritual

Performing religious ritual	Percentage (%)
N = 270	
Prayer	
Regularly	73
Irregularly	27
Never	0
Fasting	
Regularly	85.9
Irregularly	13.3
Never	0.7
Donation	
Regularly	56.7
Once in a while	39.6
Never	3.7

As shown in Table 2, 73% of the respondents prayed regularly and 27% prayed irregularly. Nearly nine-in-ten (85.9%) observed fasting regularly, while a small minority (13.3%) irregularly and just only 0.7% never observed fasting. Regarding how often they contribute time, assets and volunteer to help and/or participate in the religious activities of the mosque, the result were more than half of the respondents (56.7%) observed regularly, 39.6% once in a while and 3.7% never.

Part III Data of Media Exposure, Perception and Gratification

Frequency in accessing media sources classified according to media source is presented in the following tables.

Table 3.1 Frequency in Reading a Newspaper

Frequency in Accessing	Percentage (%) N = 270
Every day	37.8
2-3 times a week	40.7
Once a month	10
Never	11.5

As showed in Table 3.1, nearly four-in-ten (37.8%) say they read newspaper every day, a plurality of the respondents (40.7%) say two to three times a week, while 11.5% of the respondents never read newspaper.

Table 3.2 Frequency in Accessing a Weekly Magazine

Frequency in Accessing	Percentage (%)
	N = 270
Every day	4.4
2-3 times a week	19.6
Once a month	31.9
Never	44.1

As indicated in Table 3.2, a sizable number of the respondents (44.1%) never accessed a weekly magazine, with 31.9% once a month and just only 4.4% accessed everyday.

Table 3.3 Frequency in Accessing an Internet

Frequency in Accessing	Percentage (%)
	N = 270
Every day	15.2
2-3 times a week	23.0
Once a month	12.2
Never	49.7

From Table 3.3, it is notable that nearly half of the respondents (49.7%) never access the Internet, while 12.2% say once a month, and 23% say two to three times a week, with 15.2% of the respondents accessing the Internet every day.

Table 3.4 Frequency in Listening to a Radio

Frequency in Accessing	Percentage (%)
	N = 270
Every day	26.3
2-3 times a week	25.9
Once a month	11.9
Never	36

As shown in Table 3.4, 36% say they never listen to the radio, with 11.9% accessing once a month, 25.9% two to three times a week, and 26.3% say everyday.

Table 3.5 Frequency in Accessing a Television

Frequency in Accessing	Percentage (%)
	N = 270
Every day	79.6
2-3 times a week	13.3
Once a month	4.8
Never	2.2

From Table 3.5, it can be seen that nearly eight-in-ten (79.6%) of the respondents watching television every day, while just only 2.2% say they never watched the television.

Table 4 The frequency of respondents in following the news and situation in the southern border provinces

Frequency in following news and the situation in the southern border provinces	Percentage (%) N = 270
Every day	60.4
2-3 times a week	35.9
Never	3.7

As shown in Table 4, most of the respondents followed the news and situation in the southern border provinces. A majority of the respondents (60.4%) followed the news every day, a minority (35.9%) say two to three times a week, with just only 3.3% never followed the news.

Table 5 The rating of the respondents' satisfaction of media impartiality in presenting situations in the southern border provinces

Level of satisfaction	Percentage of satisfaction with impartiality of the media				
	Newspaper	Weekly Magazine	Radio	Television	Internet
Most	7.4	1.8	4.7	15.7	10.3
More	15.2	11.0	13.4	17.2	32.9
Medium	52.9	54.1	53	43.4	30.5
Less	18.3	25.7	21.6	17.6	16
Least	6.2	7.3	7.3	6.0	10.3

As shown in Table 5, more than half of the respondents have moderately satisfied with the impartiality of a newspaper, a weekly magazine, and radio, and with a roughly majority (43.5%) for a television, and three-in-ten (32.9%) for an Internet.

Regarding to in-between group as actually satisfaction and dissatisfaction, the internet is the highest rating of satisfaction, with sizable minority (43.20%), and 26.3% or almost three-in-ten dissatisfaction. For the television impartiality, three-in-ten (32.9%) satisfied, while two-in-ten (23.6%) dissatisfied. It is notable that the rest of media have stronger dissatisfaction than satisfaction, with approximately three-to-one (33% -12.8%) for the weekly magazine, and three-to-two (28.9% - 18.10%) for the radio, and a slightly higher amount of disaffection (24.5% - 22.6%) for the newspaper.

Table 6 The overall respondents' satisfaction of media neutrality presentation

Overall satisfaction of media impartiality	Percentage (%)
Strongly satisfied	2.6
Satisfied	15.2
Moderate satisfied	54.4
Dissatisfied	20.7
Strongly dissatisfied	7

As shown in Table 6, a majority (54.4%) reporting moderate satisfaction, with 27.7% either dissatisfied or strongly dissatisfied, and only 17.8% of the respondents were actually satisfied with media impartiality.

Part IV Data of Attitudes and Opinions Towards the Problems in the Southern Provinces and Ideas About Solutions

Table 7 Respondents' opinion towards the causes of the problem in the southern border provinces

The cause of the problem	Mean	SD.	Interpretation
1. The difference in religion between the majority in the region and the rest of the country.	2.93	1.30	Neutral
2. The difference in culture and way of life between the majority in the region and the rest of the country	3.11	1.28	Neutral
3. The difference in historical background between the majority in the region and the rest of the country.	3.24	1.16	Neutral
4. A need of Muslim Thais in the southern border provinces to be self- governing.	2.86	1.20	Neutral
5. A need of Muslim Thais in the southern border provinces to be autonomous.	2.78	1.27	Neutral
6. Deficiency in understanding of culture and Muslim's way of life among authorities in the southern border provinces.	3.98	0.99	Agree
7. Prejudice by government officials against Muslim Thais when they contact with government agencies.	3.77	1.14	Agree
8. Injustice and discrimination by government officials to Muslim Thais when they contact with government agencies.	3.95	0.97	Agree
9. Government officials lack of interest in suppression of crimes.	3.89	0.98	Agree
10. Indifference to drug trafficking in the region.	3.86	1.01	Agree

Table 7 (cont.)

The cause of the problem	Mean	SD.	Interpretation
11. Corruption of local governors and politicians	4.14	0.93	Agree
12. Politics and dominating groups in the southern border provinces.	4.21	0.91	Agree
13. Abandonment and insincerity of the government in resolving the problems of unrest.	4.13	0.97	Agree
14. Abandonment and indifference of the government in encouraging education which result in Muslim Thais in the southern border provinces lack opportunity in education.	4.03	1.00	Agree
15. Poverty and unemployment of people in the southern border provinces.	3.87	1.08	Agree

As indicated in Table 7, that Item 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 all represented that the respondents' opinions were neutral. The total mean score of these five issues was ($\bar{X} = 2.78$). Meanwhile, Item 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 had total mean score at ($\bar{X} = 3.98$). Most of the respondents believed that the government officials' and authorities' actions were causes of the problem. There was agreement among the respondents that deficiency in understanding culture and Muslim's way of life, actions of prejudice, discrimination against Muslim Thais in the region, abandonment in defense and suppression crime and drug trafficking, and corruption by the government officials and authorities were causes of the problem. They also agreed that the government was insincere in its resolve the problems of unrest, poverty and education.

Table 8 Ranking the importance of the problem in the southern border provinces, ranked from one to five, with one being least important, two less important, three moderate important, four very important, and five most important

The cause of the problem	Percentage of importance (%)				
	5	4	3	2	1
1. Deficiency of understanding local culture	39.2	22.1	19.4	7.2	12.2
2. The government officials' indifference to the well-being of people	40.2	31.0	17.2	10.0	1.5
3. Corruption and cronyism's benefits	46.5	30	16.9	4.2	2.3
4. Crime problem	38.8	28.7	21.7	7.8	3.1
5. Drug trafficking	41.3	28.7	20.9	5.1	3.9
6. Poverty and unemployment	34	29.7	22.8	8.5	5
7. Education and lack of educational opportunity	44.4	26.1	18.8	5.7	5

As shown in Table 8, it is notable that a plurality cited all seven problems as the most important problem. A majority (46.5%) viewed corruption and cronyism's benefits as the most important factors, with 30% ranking it as very important, while just only 2.3% ranking it at the least important problem. A roughly majority (44%) cited education and lack of educational opportunity as the most important problem, with 26.1% ranked for very important problem. While only 5% ranked at the least

important problem. To a slightly lesser degree the majority of the respondents viewed deficiency in understanding local cultures 39.4%, crime problem 38.8%, and poverty and unemployment 34% as the most important.

Table 9 Respondents' attitudes towards extremists' violence in the southern border provinces

Extreme Action	Mean	SD.	Interpretation
1. Burning schools, destroying public properties	1.55	.870	disagree
2. Ambush or slaughter monks	1.51	.782	disagree
3. Ambush or slaughter innocent people	1.40	.756	disagree
4. Ambush or slaughter government official	1.56	.861	disagree
5. Placing bombs at shops, department stores, airports, etc.	1.5	.855	disagree

As seen in Table 9, the respondents position unfavorable attitudes with every act of extremists' violence: burning school and destroying public properties, killing monks, innocent people, and government officials, as well as bombing public places.

Table 10 Respondents' opinions towards actions the government should take to resolve the problems

Government action	Mean	SD.	Interpretation
1. The government should make more effort to solve the problems in the southern border provinces	4.43	.805	agree
2. The government should declare martial law in the southern border province	3.01	1.305	neutral
3. The government should negotiate with the extremists to stop the violence	3.97	1.009	agree
4. The government should stop using force to solve the problems in the southern border provinces	3.97	1.129	agree
5. The government should implement reconciliation and peaceful policy to solve the problems in the southern border provinces	4.28	.960	agree
6. The government should encourage and motivate residents to participate in solving problems in the southern border provinces	4.44	.768	agree
7. The government should give importance of eradicating drug trafficking in the southern border provinces	4.39	.742	agree
8. The government should increase the budget to develop the economy in the southern border provinces	4.19	.911	agree

Table 10 (cont.)

Government action	Mean	SD.	Interpretation
9. The government should solve the unemployment problem in the southern border provinces	4.26	.722	agree
10. The government should establish a combined secular and religious school curriculum.	4.43	.737	agree
11. The government should encourage and support Pondok (residential religious school) and establish occupational training for the students in Pondok	4.43	.771	agree

As indicated in Table 10, apart from the judgment of neutral about the government declaration of martial law, most of the respondents had agreement with Item 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. They agreed that the government should make enough effort to negotiate with the extremist to stop the violence, and stop using force. Meanwhile, the government should try to establish reconciliation and peaceful policies encourage and motivate residents in the region to participate in solving the problem. Furthermore, the government should pay attention to eradicate drug trafficking, increasing the budget to develop economy and reduce unemployment, as well as setting up occupational training course for students in Pondok (residential religious school), and establishing a combine secular and religious school curriculum.

Table 11 Respondents' attitudes towards the previous and current governments' action of solution

The government action	Mean	SD.	Interpretation
1. The Taksin government effort in solving the problem in the southern border provinces	2.41	1.131	unsatisfied
2. The current government effort in solving the problem in the southern border provinces	3.21	.819	moderately satisfied
3. The Taksin government sincerity in solving the problem in the southern border provinces	2.32	1.090	unsatisfied
4. The current government sincerity in solving the problem in the southern border provinces	3.17	.932	moderately satisfied

Table 11, shows that the respondents were unsatisfied with the Taksin government actions, while they are moderately satisfied with the current government actions.

Table 12 Respondents' expectation towards the situation in the southern border provinces

The degree of tendency	Percentage (%)
Getting worse	24.3
Continuing without ending	44.8
Calm down	30.9
No opinion	4.1

Table 12 shows that 44.8% of the respondents expected that tendency of unrest in the southern border provinces would continue indefinitely. 30.9% of the respondents believed that it would calm down, with 24.3% of the respondents said it would become worse, and just only 4.1% indicated that they had no idea whether the situation would be worse, calm down or peaceful.

Part V Data Obtained from Community Leaders

The data were given personally by three Muslim communities' leaders via informal interview conducted using a tape recorder. The names of interviewees and places were kept anonymous for security reasons.

5.1 “What is your feeling and opinion toward the violence that has been happening in the southern border provinces?”, the question was asked of one community leader: he said that his feelings were not different from all Thais who were Muslims or non-Muslims. He was sad and felt that these incidents of violence should not take place in Thailand where there was freedom for every faith. He said that the use of violence was not acceptable, especially killing innocent people.

5.2 When asked “What do you think are the causes of the problem in the southern border provinces?”, all of the interviewees agreed that the current problems were the effects of the incompatible and mishandled acts of governments in the past which included many factors, especially the actions from the government officials and authorities such as failure to develop and improve education and economics of the region, and insincerities to resolve the social problems such as corruption and cronyism, poverty, crime, and drug trafficking. One of the interviewees gave evidence of insensitivity of the government by citing the land apportionment policy of the past government. He said that the lands in the region were shared with the poor peoples who were from the north east of Thailand, while ignoring the poor peoples in the area of those lands. When justice disappeared, it became no wonder to see resentment and oppression. Government officials and authorities lack of understanding the language, culture, way of life, and religion were another factor that created untrustworthiness. The local residents felt a sense of unwelcoming and discrimination when they had to contact government officials and authorities due to the absence of understanding and the language barrier. They also agreed that the tough policy and the use of violence to suppress an opponent was a vital key that made the situation in the southern border worsen.

5.3 When asked “What are your suggestions for solving problems in the southern border provinces?”, all of the interviewees recommended that the government had to make more effort to ease problems with sincerity, looking for reconciliation to bring lasting and sustaining peace to the southern border provinces. They all agreed that applying justice was a key factor and necessary step towards restoring peace and security in the unrest south. They expressed that the problem in the southern border provinces was a long continuing problem, which was the result of poor governance in the past. Actually, it was not easy to resolve since the problem has accumulated for decades and is too complicated to be eradicated within a short period of time. They all disagreed with all the extremism whether it was committed by the government or the locals. They thought that using extremism could not solve the problem or improve the situation. On the contrary, it would increase the violence and inflame hostility. However, they all agreed with the reconciliation policy, and the government’s performances by following King Bhumiphon’s speech “Approaching, Understanding, Developing” that the current government had used to deal with the problems, and believed that those approaches would be effective enough to restore peace and security in the long-run. Additionally, they all agreed that the government should pay attention in improving education and enhancing livelihoods of youth to give them an opportunity for a better future. Yet, the success in solving the problems and restoring peace to the region demand unity of efforts by the government agencies and the cooperation of local residents.

5.4 To the question “What is your feeling and opinion for the government actions of suppression such as the Tak Bai, or the Krue Sae incidents?”, all of the interviewees disagreed with the government’s operations. One of the interviewees said that the operations were enormous errors, especially the Tak Bai incident. Until now there have been no acceptable answers for the reason of those actions. Another interviewee said that it seemed like the government was inexperienced of negotiation and did not know how to deal with conflict. They seem to act quickly and emotionally without a step by step approach.

5.5 When asked “Do you agree or disagree with the policy of resolving the problem of violence proposed by the NRC?”, they all agreed with the reconciliation policy submitted by the NRC. However, they suggested that without perseverance to bring the policy into particular actions, a project could not bear any useful consequence.

5.6 To the question “What is your opinion about the violence committed by insurgents, for example burning schools, placing bombs in public that cause many innocent people to die?”, one of the interviewees said that only slight number of locals was involved in the violence. The majority did not support violence. Moreover, killing innocent people, and destroying public assets, or even burning a tree is forbidden in Islam. In his view the violence were committed in order to create chaotic situation in the southern border province which aimed to discredit the government. On the other hand, such outcomes created a deep rupture and increased mutual distrust and suspicions. Then, handling the situation the government officials had to work with the people with sincerity and tried to win their heart in order to attract locals to cooperate purposefully and consistently in reporting information about criminal tip. In these ways would lead to arrest real culprits and eliminate mutual distrust and suspicions. Moreover, all of the interviewees agreed that everyone who committed crime had to be arrested and brought to court for justice. Another interviewee said that there were some people who had both Malay and Thai nationality. Some of these people committed crimes and fled easily to neighboring country. He wanted the government to seek a diplomatic method with the neighboring country to cope with people who held dual nationality in order to obstructed felons in escaping to the neighboring country.